

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 211
February
2013**

"There's always room for a spoon solo!"

STORNOWAY

telling
tales



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plus

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU

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STORNOWAY play an acoustic set as part of a **Childish Things** music special at **The New Theatre** this month. The local folk-pop heroes, whose two headline shows at Oxford Town Hall this month have already sold out, join **KT Tunstall**, **Newton Faulkner** and **Bug Prentice** on **Monday 4th February**. Childish Things, now in its ninth year, is an annual fundraising concert for Helen & Douglas House Hospice, the world's first children's hospice. Hosted by comedian Rob Brydon, this is the first dedicated Childish Things music concert and is followed on the Tuesday and Wednesday by the traditional music and comedy nights. Tickets, priced £25, are available from the New Theatre box office or online at www.atgtickets.com. Tickets are also on sale from all Helen & Douglas House shops in Witney, Thame, Abingdon, Chipping Norton and Wallingford. Visit www.facebook.com/childishthingsshow

THE OXFORD PUNT is open for acts to apply to play. As reported in last month's Nightshift, the annual showcase of unsigned Oxford talent takes place on **Wednesday 8th May**, featuring 16 acts at **The Purple Turtle**, **The Cellar**, **The Wheatsheaf**, **The Duke's Cut** and the newly-opened **White Rabbit** in Friar's Entry, off Gloucester Green.

Bands or solo acts wanting to play at The Punt can submit demos, either by emailing links to online music (no sound files, please) to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, or sending CDs to **Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**. In both cases, please clearly mark your demo PUNT and include both phone and email contact details and a brief biog of the band. Only acts from Oxfordshire may apply, you can't apply if you played The Punt last year and, due to the licensing conditions of all the venues, only bands aged over 18 will be eligible. Deadline for demos is the 10th March, with the line-up announced on the 15th.

As ever, a limited number of all-venue Punt passes will be on sale from early February.

TRUCK FESTIVAL TICKETS go on sale from 7pm on Monday 4th February. This year's Truck takes place on **Friday 19th and Saturday 20th July** at Hill Farm in Steventon. Last year's event was the first under the new management of Y Not Festival and sold out, earning a number of nominations at the annual UK Festival Awards. Visit www.truckfestival.com for more news.

TRUCK STORE celebrates its second birthday this month with a full day of live music instore. The Cowley Road shop is Oxford's only independent record store and, depending on the future of HMV, may soon be the only dedicated music retailer in the city. The birthday celebrations take place on **Sunday 10th February**, starting at 1pm. **Trophy Wife**, **Rhosyn**,



OMD head a host of big names coming to **The New Theatre** later this year. The synth-pop legends return to Oxford on **Monday 6th May**, their first show in town since 2007, to promote new album 'English Electric'. Tickets, priced £33.50, are on sale from www.atgtickets.com. Other shows of note at the venue include **Simple Minds** on Thursday 3rd May, as part of their Greatest Hits tour, and an evening with **Bryan Ferry** on Sunday 3rd November.

Also coming to the New Theatre in 2012 is a feast of big-name folk acts in the form of **Bellowhead** (Wed 13th February); **Formerly of the Dubliners** (Wed 20th March) and **Steeleye Span** (Fri 29th March). Tickets for all shows, as well as further gig news, at www.atgtickets.com.



GUNNING FOR TAMAR play their biggest hometown show to date when they headline the **O2 Academy** on **Saturday 16th March**.

The local math-rock faves are launching their new 'Camera Lucida' EP, which is released on **Alcopop!** that week. The EP is also released in France, The Netherlands and Belgium on Hip!Hip!Hip! Records and in Spain on Desert Pearl Union.

The Academy show is the first date on an extensive UK tour throughout March and April, followed by a month-long tour around Europe, finishing in Germany on 11th May.

Support for the Oxford show comes from Wot Gorilla?, Salvation Bill and Phil McMinn. Tickets, priced £6, are on sale now via Ticketweb, or from the Academy box office. Visit www.facebook.com/gunningfortamar for more news and gig info.

Salvation Bill, **New Carnival** and **Jordan O'Shea** are the acts already lined up.

Other Truck instores planned for February are Artclasssink and The Method on Thursday 14th, and Very Nice Harry and The Drakes on Friday 15th.

We know we bang on about this kind of thing, but it's vital to support

local shops like Truck. As well as a wide selection of CDs and vinyl, they also sell a comprehensive range of local bands' music and provide an important service for local acts and promoters. Use them or lose them. Visit www.truckmusicstore.co.uk for all sorts of news and stuff.

BBC OXFORD INTRODUCING has moved to a new time slot. The dedicated local music show is now broadcast on Saturdays at 8pm, putting it in line with all other BBC Introducing regional shows. Dave Gilyeat presents the hour-long show on 95.2fm, playing the best new Oxford releases and demos, as well as featuring interviews and sessions with local acts. The show is available to listen to online all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford as well as to download as a podcast.

Regularly updated local music news is available online at www.musicinoxford.co.uk. The site also features interactive reviews, a gig guide, photo gallery and more.

WWW.GIGSINOXFORD.CO.UK

NEWS



ALICE COOPER is the surprise headline act for the opening night of **Fairport Convention's** annual **Cropredy Festival** this year. The veteran rocker tops the bill on Thursday 8th August and is joined by **Edward II** and **Fairport Acoustic**, among others.

10cc top the Friday night bill, alongside **The Levellers** and **Kathryn Roberts** and **Seth Lakeman**, while **Fairport** themselves play their traditional Saturday night headline set. Saturday's bill also features **Nik Kershaw** and **Peatbog Faeries**. Tickets for this year's **Cropredy Festival**, which runs from Thursday 8th-Saturday 10th August, go on sale from 1st February at www.fairportconvention.com.

OXFORD FOLK WEEKEND is set to return later this year. The festival takes place over weekend of **19th-21st April**. As with last year's inaugural event, which took up the baton when the Oxford Folk Festival was cancelled, most concerts take place at the Old Fire Station on George Street. Headline acts confirmed so far include BBC Folk Awards winner **Jackie Oates**; Folk Awards Young Band finalists **Tyde**; Turkish-Cypriot singer **Dogan Mehmet** and **The Melrose Quartet**. Local acts include Magpie Lane; Ian Giles & David Townsend; Boldwood; Jon Fletcher; Jenkinson's Folly; James Bell and harpist Steph West. As well as concerts there will be ceilidhs, family singing sessions, Morris dancing and a traditional English village fete, taking in venues as diverse as the Ashmolean, the Westgate library, the Oxford Castle

gardens, the Newman Rooms and Gloucester Green.

Last year's Folk Weekend has been shortlisted for an Epic Award, which celebrates amateur music and arts events across the UK.

Tickets for the festival are on sale now. Adult weekend tickets are £48 (£42 concessions; £30 for under-18s and £20 for under-12s). Visit www.folkweekendoxford.co.uk.

THE CELLAR launches two new live music club nights this month. Continuing to excel at hosting an eclectic range of music, the venue hosts **The Hoodoo Club** on Saturday 2nd February, featuring alt.country and Americana. The inaugural night features raucous Cajun, zydeco and bluegrass outfit Police Dog Hogan, as well as local Americana crew Swindlestock. On Sunday 17th, Brainlove Records kick off a new **Label Profile Sessions** night, each month featuring bands and DJs from small indie labels from around the country. Iceland's Oyama play live, while label honcho Mat Riviere is on the decks. Visit www.cellaroxford.co.uk for details of all the venue's gig and club nights.

ONE WEEKEND CLOSER TO WITTSTOCK runs over the weekend of **Friday 15th Sunday-17th February** at **The Hollybush** in Osney. The three-day mini festival is set to raise funds for the main Wittstock Festival at the Railway Inn in Culham over the first weekend in May.

The February fundraiser kicks off on the Friday evening with sets from Komrad, Demask Thyself and Mammoth & The Drum. Saturday's proceedings run from 2pm through to midnight, featuring sets from Reservoir Cats, Von Braun, The Hawkhurst, Agness Pike, Junkie Brush, Gulp, Welcome To Peepworld, The Right Hooks, The Method and Ideal Koala, with the Sunday featuring The Goggenheim,



DAUGHTER play **Oxford Town Hall** on **Tuesday 23rd April**. The London band, centred around singer and guitarist Elena Tonra, signed to 4AD last year and release their debut album, 'If You Leave', in March. The trio have enjoyed widespread critical acclaim for their fragile, brooding pop, releasing their last EP, 'The Wild Youth', on Mumford & Sons' Communion label, and selling out their January UK tour. Tickets for the Town Hall show are on sale now, priced £13, from www.alt-tickets.co.uk.

Reckless Sleepers, Traps, Chris Grant, Firegazers and more to be added. The entire weekend is free, but donations are welcome and there's a raffle to help raise funds. Visit www.wittstock.co.uk for more details.

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND launch their own brand of cider at a special show at **The Big Bang** in the Oxford castle complex on **Saturday 9th February**. The party-hearty hot jazz crew apparently enjoy the odd tippie on occasion. Samples of the new brew were handed out to punters at the band's Christmas party at the O2 Academy in December, with one Nightshift booze guinea pig admiring its subtle fusion of "sour apples and lighter fluid".

AUDIOGRAFT returns to Oxford from the end of February. The third annual festival of experimental music and sonic art features concerts and exhibitions at various venues around Oxford. Among the highlights are shows by John Tilbury, Tim Parkinson, The Set Ensemble and Austin Sherlaw

MAJOR LAZER play the **O2 Academy** on **Thursday 2nd May** as part of a world tour to promote new album 'Free The Universe', out this month. The dancehall, reggae, hip hop and moombahton mash-up project of Diplo have also been working with Snoop Dogg and No Doubt, having previously been remixed by Thom Yorke. Tickets, priced £18, are on sale now from the Academy box office or www.ticketweb.co.uk.

Johnson at the Holywell Music Room on Thursday 28th February; Susanna Borsch and Daniel Teruggi at Modern on Art on Friday 1st March and Phill Niblock, Thomas Ankesmit, Ornis and Valerio Trio at Modern Art on Saturday 2nd March. Exhibitions by Rolf Julius and Helmut Lemke run from 25th February through to early March at Modern Art and Brookes University. Visit www.audiograft.com.

PASSION PLAY release a farewell album this month. The band, which has essentially been singer and guitarist Justin Stephens since he left Oxford for Berlin a few years back, releases 'The Final Act' before calling it a day. The 13-song album features re-recorded versions of songs from 1998 EP 'Name No Names' and 1999's 'Stress Fractures' album, plus five brand new songs. Passion Play were cult favourites on the UK and European goth scene in the late-90s and early-noughties. Get the CD from passionplay.co.uk.

SEBASTIAN REYNOLDS launches a new monthly remix project in aid of local charities this month. Seb, best known as a member of myriad local bands, including The Epstein and Flights of Helios, as well as promoter of the regular Pindrop Performance shows around Oxford, is selling the remixes through Bandcamp. The first offering is a remix of Meursault's 'Dearly Distracted', in aid of Helen & Douglas House Hospice, with remixes of fellow local acts promised in the future. Get them at www.sebastianreynolds.bandcamp.com

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a quiet word with

STORNOWAY

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“BALLOON MODELLING.
And I got a new phone.”

BRIAN BRIGGS IS, WITH characteristically understated humour, explaining to Nightshift what he and the rest of Stornoway have been up to since we last interviewed them. That was two and a half years ago, in the summer of 2010. It’s almost a year and half since the band last played a gig in Oxford. Nothing else to report? “We have been trying!” offers Jonathan Quin with the faint air of desperation of a man who’s awoken from a heavy night out and is trying to recall where he left his trousers.

WHAT STORNOWAY HAVE been up to since they headlined a sold-out show in aid of the Sumatran Orangutan Appeal at the Regal back in September 2011, is touring the globe and writing and recording their new album, ‘Tales From Terra Firma’, the follow-up to their sublime debut, ‘Beachcomber’s Window’, an album of which Nightshift declared, “If critical and commercial success evades them, then we give up, because if music this good is to be wasted on the world, then the world isn’t worth bothering about.” Thankfully the world did sit up and listen and ‘Beachcomber’s Windowsill’ entered the album charts at number 14, and was later certified silver.

With ‘Tales From Terra Firma’ set to be released in March, Stornoway this month head off on an extensive UK tour to signal their return, starting in Hebden Bridge and ending up at The Forum in London – a sign of the staus they’ve achieved. The tour includes a two-night stint at Oxford Town Hall, both nights of which, at time of going to print, look likely to have sold out. Oxford clearly hasn’t forgotten its heroes. Neither have they forgotten the city that helped shape them and provided such enthusiastic support in the years they were crafting their distinctive sound.

THE QUARTET (BRIAN AND Jonathan are augmented by brothers Ollie and Rob Steadman) have always been keen for local fans to hear new songs first and have always strived to make Oxford shows a little bit special, whether it’s playing at grand and unusual venues like The Sheldonian, or intimate boltholes like the A1 Pool Hall off Cowley Road. The band remains, too, as modest and unassuming as they ever were, armed with a quiet sense of mischief as they contemplate interview questions. It’s been a long while since a hometown show; got anything special lined up? Ollie: “Last time, at the Regal, which was the last show before it was churched, was the final night of a tour and we released some massive white balloons during final track

‘Zorbing’. They ascended towards the stage lighting array in the roof. We knew it’d be their last outing of the summer, but didn’t expect the explosion of latex and spittle that showered the audience for the duration of the trumpet solo. It’ll be something to live up to in February.” Brian “We are scheming plans to let rip on the big ol’ church organ in there! I for one will be nervous about showcasing the new album to our long-standing supporters and friends; we really want them to like it!” You’ve played pretty much every exotic Oxford venue there is now, and a few less than exotic ones. Wherever will you play next time? Brian: “Maybe we could do a U2 style top-of-building type gig from the roof of the toilets on St Giles? Or maybe when the second album goes multi-platinum we will have to play live on Skype from our respective Californian mansions, and get our manager to put up a screen in the Purple Turtle.”

EVEN AWAY FROM OXFORD, Stornoway have found themselves playing unusual venues. Last year they played in the dinosaur hall at the historic Peabody Museum at Yale. How was that as an experience? Ollie: “The audience was very different to usual, you see. There’s an untapped music fan demographic either side of the typical gig going adult: toddlers and grans. Both were

out in full force at the museum, it being a Sunday, and we discovered this whole new intriguing fanbase. They listen very attentively, and they buy t-shirts at the drop of a Stornoway-branded hackisack. Sunday brunch gigs in the Pitt Rivers should become a regular feature in Oxford.” Brian: “Our recent acoustic gig in a ‘boat’ perched on top of the QEII Concert Hall above the Thames next to the London Eye was quite a treat too, especially as it was also our accommodation for the night, an incredible place to wake up! Playing in the Sheldonian is still probably an all time highlight for me, though.”

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE tour, of course, comes the new album release. How different was the writing and recording of ‘Tales From Terra Firma’ compared to ‘Beachcomber’s Windowsill’? The first album was made up of myriad recording sessions from across a period of time. Was the new album written and recorded in a more cohesive fashion? Brian: “The new album was written in a much more condensed period; most of it was written within the space of a few months, as compared with about five years for the first. Having said that, I had been gathering lyrical ideas for the songs from long before ‘Beachcomber’s Windowsill’ came out, but without finding the time to write them. So when we stopped touring ‘Beachcomber’s...’ and time finally opened up, I found that the songwriting really flowed, and I think it was the same for Jon. There was never a sense of it being the ‘difficult second album’! Most of the songs were written in my campervan, tucked away behind my house in Temple Cowley. “The recording was also completed in a far more condensed period, although the process was much like the previous album, in so far as we did it all ourselves in Oxford. We recorded at home, mainly in Rob and Oli’s garage, but also made a few trips to St. Michael at the North Gate church on Cornmarket Street, the East Oxford Community Centre, and the barn on Hill Farm in Steventon. We could have gone to a studio but we’ve never really enjoyed working under that kind of time pressure; we prefer to work out the arrangements in our own time and try out lots of different instruments as we record!”

‘TALES FROM TERRA FIRMA’, like its predecessor, is out on the legendary 4AD label, host to countless cult and pioneering acts over the decades. In an age where record labels are quicker than ever to ditch bands that don’t produce immediate financial returns, 4AD is a beacon of how labels should be run, staying loyal to their roster. We guess both band and label are still happy with one another. How do Stornoway think they are different to other labels, from a band’s perspective, particularly as far as pressure to play the industry game goes? Brian: “They are pretty perfect from our perspective. They were incredibly hands-off during the writing and recording of the album, which is exactly what we wanted. We can’t really say what it would be like with another label. In terms of our creative freedom it must help that 4AD are not all about the sales figures. On the flip side, perhaps a more commercially driven label would inject more money into promoting us, but then you hear the horror stories as to how the ‘majors’ can behave. I’m reading Little Fish’s book at the moment and feeling pretty lucky we didn’t have their record company experiences!” Being signed to 4AD, Nightshift jokingly wonders whether Stornoway get to hang out with legendarily enigmatic labelmate Scott Walker. Jonathan: “No sadly not, but I’m not convinced he’d really want to, so it’s probably for the best! Aside from the 4AD connection, our new album does have a tenuous link with Scott Walker, though. A musician called Alasdair Malloy played the glass harmonica (a bowl organ) on one of the new songs, and the day after our session with him, I was watching a Scott Walker documentary called *30th Century Man*, and lo and behold Alasdair appeared on screen – not playing glass harmonica this time, but punching a piece of meat as percussion in the studio. The footage was from when Walker was making ‘The Drift’ album a few years ago, with Scott giving very incisive meat-punching directions from the studio desk. My favourite album of his later stuff is ‘Climate of Hunter’, and I’ve not given the new one a proper listen yet, but I’m sure it will be... unnerving!”

ONE OF THE STRIKING facets of ‘Tales...’ is the sheer array of instrumentation on the new album – from mandolins to autoharp and harpsichord. There has always been a slightly dizzying virtuosity about Stornoway’s musicianship ad willingness to try something new. Was it case of writing songs and then thinking such and such an instrument would fit in, or was there a feeling,

given the virtuosity in the band, you could pick and choose to play anything or everything and fit it into the songs? Brian: “Very much the former! The arrangements and instrumentation we use are shaped by the mood and feel of the original demos. Some arrangements are a bit more trial and error than others, but we’d never include an instrument unless we thought it really fitted in with our vision for the song. Unless it’s a spoon solo – there’s always room for a spoon solo.” Previously Brian was very much the main songwriter; have such duties been shared out a bit more this time? Brian: “Um, not really. As with the first album Jon co-wrote a couple of songs; the main difference is that the song arrangement and recording has been much more of a team effort, so our individual influences can be heard much more within the songs. One of Oli’s bass parts features a South African bird call!” The album starts off on such a high, there’s a real feeling of euphoria about ‘You Take Me As I Am’; do you think that will take people by surprise? Brian: “I’d say ‘Zorbing’ was also an uplifting album opener, although I think ‘You Take Me As I Am’ showcases a new, bigger sound which may surprise people. We certainly hope the album will sound like a development from the first one, and hold plenty of surprises in store for people.” By contrast ‘The Bigger Picture’ and ‘The Great Procrastinator’ are more in the reflective Celtic Dorian mode we’ve come to expect from Stornoway; are you still romantic dreamers? Ollie: “Some of us are fans of the folk-tome *Electric Eden* by Rob Young. It covers the development of modal folk and progressions in pastoral pop up to the end of the 70s... if there’s a romantic feel in our music linking back to those legendary players of the 20th century it’s a huge honour! Our first tour around the Highlands, Islands and Ireland, exploring the ruined hilltop towers and sitting in on a fiddle session in Stornoway, certainly left us some dramatic landscapes to dream about, when back in sleepy Oxford town.” And then there’s ‘Farewell Appalachia’, which already feels like a stand-out moment; wistful,

romantic and widescreen; was it written from personal experience of the place? Brian: “Yes, I did two trips out there, long-distance hiking the Appalachian trail through Vermont and New Hampshire, and the lyrics are inspired by the feeling you can get from being alone in a beautiful bit of wilderness, with all the mountain air and physical exercise. The words also cover the kind of reminiscing you can do when your life revolves around the simple needs of food, water, warmth and shelter. The music was co-written with Jon, and recorded in a church on Cornmarket Street. It features my brother Adam on Appalachian dulcimer and Appalachian crisp packets.”

“We didn’t expect the explosion of latex and spittle that showered the audience for the duration of the trumpet solo. It’ll be something to live up to in February.”

‘TALES...’ CLOSSES WITH ‘November Song’, which noticeably carries some wonderfully cosy, rustic lyrical imagery. Does it reflect a happiness with Brian’s lot in life? Brian: “Yes I am now a smug and contented slipper-wearing bearded bard with no major health problems. I reside next to a roaring fire in a cottage in a wood near Netherton-under-Wootton-cum-Studley and rest my feet on a dachshund while my Thai wife massages my thighs with reduced fat margarine.” Jonathan: “Really? I never knew. Must pay you a visit sometime.” Talking of home life, Brian, became a dad for the second time recently; how has that affected both his writing and plans for stuff like world tours. Is it going to be all sentimental lullabies and home to bed after each show, or an ocean of sleep-deprived rage coming out and jumping at the chance to tour Australia for two months? Brian: “I’m too tired to answer this one; can someone else do it and make me a cup of Berocca. And also the next album while you’re at it, please?”

WHILE STORNOWAY ARE long-time local heroes, beloved of both local reviewers and broadcasters (BBC Oxford’s Tim Bearder famously got himself into a lot of trouble by playing the band’s songs for a full hour while guest presenting the breakfast show once) as well as gig goers, we’re all too aware of the band’s history. But beyond Oxford and their wider core audience is there any worry that with Mumford and Sons and Villagers,

to whom they have previously been compared, releasing new albums around now, that Stornoway might either get lumped in with them or compared unfavourably, by critics who aren’t so well versed in the band’s history? Jonathan: “No, it’s not a concern really. We’re always aware that a lot of people further afield might never have heard our music if it weren’t for comparisons with a certain massive band over the last three years or so, and in that sense we’re very grateful. But there’s a bit of a balancing act, I suppose: like pretty much anyone who writes and records their own music, of course we’d love it if our album was listened to on its own terms and not ‘lumped in’ (a lovely phrase!) with anyone else’s... but journalistic comparisons with other bands are par for the course. Anyway, we live in hope that it might be possible to listen to our respective new albums and hear pretty distinct musical approaches!” Brian: “I love Villagers! I’d be very happy to be compared to them. Who are Mumford and Sons?” (*cue derisory snorting*).

SO WHAT DOES 2013 HOLD for Stornoway now? Is it constant touring and another summer of festivals? Ollie: “Touring is the life; the longer the drive, the better. Seventeen hours is a useful stretch, to catch up on the months of films and music you missed out on, being holed up in a studio. I like to use the van times to tinker with laptop electronica. I’ve recently produced remixes for We Aeronauts, Family Machine, Rich Walters, and Flights Of Helios... It’s a great way of carrying your favourite hometown tunes with you when in distant lands.” And, with the band’s well-documented academic backgrounds, do they ever foresee a time in the future when they might return to such cerebral pursuits. Brian: “I’ll tell you about six months after the album comes out!” Ollie: “I recently took a look at all my old chemistry papers stored on Google Drive from back in the day... In a way it’s comforting to have the memories, but I almost fainted at the prospect of ever recalling what I meant by ‘Mechanistic Cleavage in the Intradiol and Extradiol Catechol Dioxygenases’. Please tell me there’s session work out there!”

Stornoway play Oxford Town Hall on the 14th and 15th February. The band also play an acoustic set at the New Theatre on Monday 4th as part of Childish Thing’s music night. ‘Tales From Terra Firma’ is released in March. Visit www.stornoway.eu for news and tour dates.

RELEASED

FOALS

‘Holy Fire’

(*Transgressive*)

Yannis Philippakis promised us dirty funk and stinky grooves and ‘Inhaler’ duly delivered, a thunderous shot of musical adrenaline that sounded like Foals getting down deep and dirty with Bootsyz Collins and Queens Of The Stone Age, the song infused with a heady blend of rage and claustrophobia, Yannis barely able to control his voice as he bellowed “I can’t get enough space”. So expectations are sky high for ‘Holy Fire’, Foals’ third album and the highly-anticipated follow-up to the fantastic ‘Total Life Forever’.

Things start promisingly. ‘Prelude’ builds the atmosphere and teases with its ambient swirl and swarm of electronics before it turns militant and angrily industrial just as you’re getting comfortable. ‘Inhaler’ slams home the point. Foals aren’t just here to party; they’ve come to wreck the joint.

Which makes what happens next all the more puzzling and, if we’re honest, disappointing. ‘My Number’, which felt fresh and lively when they played it on *Later... With Jools Holland*, and the track Yannis promised was unashamedly Curtis Mayfield just sounds like a mid-80s electro-soul song, something nabbed from Nik Kershaw or, whisper it, Level 42. Similarly ‘Everytime’ reminds us of 80s-era Hall & Oates and even the decidedly funkier ‘Out Of The



Woods’ could be Beggar & Co.

Overall there’s too much mid-paced stuff here, and a couple of tracks at least, notably, ‘Milk & Black Spiders’, that sound like they’ve been constructed from bits and pieces from the bucket marked “Bits Of Old Foals Songs”. For a band who’ve always kept their fans on their toes and never been afraid to take a deceptive side-step or great leap forward, it feels too comfortable.

That’s not to say it’s a poor album by any means. Half of ‘Holy Fire’ still mercilessly stomps all over pretenders to the indie disco throne, like Friendly Fires or Peace. ‘Providence’ in particular is storming: a steely space-funk attack, vocally much more uptight and turning into an irresistible mantra as it aims

breath now, please? Cheers. “I don’t fucking know you / I just fucking hate you,” rings the raw-throated refrain from ‘Welcome To The Monkeysphere’, possibly a comment on the bellicose environment of the internet. Bad people beware; Junkie Brush are on your case
Dale Kattack

CHIMA ANYA

‘The Doctor’s Note’

(*Own label*)

‘The Doctor’s Note’ is no embarrassing body, but a seriously elegantly honed slice of UK hip hop, or as Chima intones it, “real life seen through a Doctor’s eyes”. Yes, you heard me, this nationally-rated MC is also a bona fide GP, whose long time family home has been Kidlington and whose working hours are spent in St.Thomas’ Hospital in London. If you add that he has a Nigerian father and a Romanian mother, and he spent his early life in Glasgow, then you see he has a whole heap of cross-pollinated genes and back story to wax lyrical about. And boy, does he! Matching his nifty lines with some of the coolest beats and production around, courtesy of Berlin based Dexter (Caspar – XOXO), creating, via Soweto Kinch, Tricky and jazzamatazz -era Guru, a very open hearted, *en plein air* groove, while scratching the myth of hip hop’s love of materialism. (“You won’t see me in the Bentley, brothers / Living the high life at the expense of others” - from ‘I Made It’).

Sponsored by



skywards; it’s perhaps superior even to ‘Inhaler’ and would make a great next single. ‘Bad Habit’ too rises from uneasy beginnings, fidgety and, like the best of Foals, deceptively epic as it steadily but unstopably builds.

By contrast ‘Late Night’ is more reflective, a twinkling uncharacteristic lament, rousing itself midway through before sinking into an easy funk jam.

The album’s final two tracks are similarly wistful. ‘Stepson’ is starry-eyed and mellow, not unlike ‘Spanish Sahara’, while listlessly spacious closer ‘Moon’ is the least typically Foals-like song here and all the more startling for it. It’s a genuinely lovely but unexpectedly downbeat ending to an album most people will have expected to punch harder and heavier, while the closing line, “This is the end” is bound to provoke all manner of debate as to the band’s future. But then, hasn’t it always been Foals’ way to point to one path before merrily taking the other.

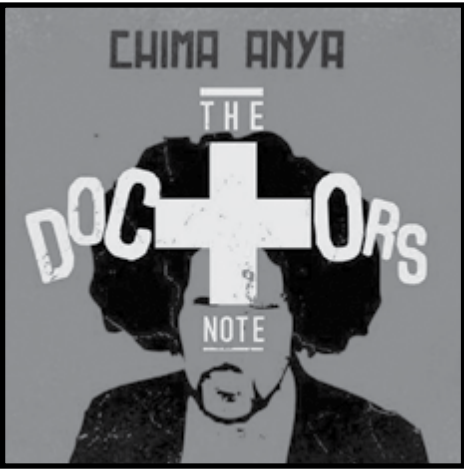
Print deadlines coupled with the late availability of the album for review (understandable due to worries over leaks and piracy) mean we only get a couple of full listens through, and perhaps with time and effort greater depths will show themselves in those tracks that initially fail to impress. On balance though, ‘Holy Fire’ is a serviceable Foals album, still a step ahead of the competition, but maybe not quite the album most people will have been waiting on.

Dale Kattack

Among the other highlights on this sophomore album is the catalogue of jolly, morbid realism on ‘Everybody Dies’; the stunningly moving ‘Michael’s Song’, a questioning tale of the trials of IVF, that ends in a prolonged battle for life in the special care baby unit; the clever use of the piano sample from Love Unlimited’s ‘Walking In The Rain’, on ‘Guess I Never’, and the optimistic coda of ‘Still Here’ (“Life is what happens / When you just happen / To be busy planning / Something else”).

As Chima says in his biog, “I rep Oxford because that’s the city I became a person in”, to which I say, on the strength of this very accessible CD, we’re pretty proud to rep you back. The Doctor will see you now.

Paul Carrera



This Town Needs Guns

‘13.0.0.0.0’

(*Sargent House*)

Avoiding the questionable and awkward decision to shackle ‘13.0.0.0.0’ with meaning related to the Mayan calendar system - the album is conceptual in as much as This Town Needs Guns’ debut ‘Animals’ was: ie. artwork and some song names - this is a confident and solid collection of twelve tracks that represent just enough of a progression, and acceptance of change, since its full-length predecessor four years ago.

The now-departed Stuart Smith’s rounded and soulful tones are now replaced with the somewhat more pained and strained vocals of Henry Tremain; the rhythmically and structurally-obtuse, throw-in-a-few-more-notes approach of a flavour of post-rock that the band themselves helped to define has been extended and simultaneously made fiercer and more slick.

Still, the core of a now-familiar This Town Needs Guns sound remains: clean, frantically-fingerpicked guitar complexity wends its way through meticulously-constructed songs, harmonising and providing counterpoint



CANDY SAYS

‘Melt Into The Sun’

(*Own label*)

The evolution of Little Fish into Candy Says began far before the name change. Members have come and gone, sounds have developed and progressed. And in front of an intimate crowd at their Christmas gigs in The Rotunda, this evolution became an official transformation. The band’s name is, of course, a reference to The Velvet Underground’s song about a transsexual, Candy Darling, in which Candy says, “I hate the quiet places / That cause the smallest taste of what will be”. Pretty appropriate then, that the band are entering a new chapter that is far from those quiet places.

If ‘Melt Into The Sun’ causes “the smallest taste of what will be” then Candy Says are in luck because the song exudes excitement and playfulness in a way that signals new beginnings supported by the experience that comes from touring with the likes of Courtney Love and Blondie. As a vocalist/guitarist who enthuses over women in rock, Juju is a fine frontwoman. Her lyrics are raw, eloquent and convincingly heartfelt. An experimental and ultimately fun vibe is underlined by the playful percussion, handclapping and whistling which neatly



to insistent, repeated basslines and rolling, collapsing drum patterns. Across ‘13.0.0.0.0’ is an impressive display of musicianship and virtuosity; the band successfully makes the tricky sound effortless, but there’s a slight danger that the band’s sound is too much of a safety blanket, preventing them from truly exploring new musical avenues (presuming, of course, that such exploration is of interest).

That said, there are glimmers of newness to be

embellish the track. Despite a more commercial sound than fans might expect, the track exudes a homegrown feel; you can imagine it being written and fiercely rehearsed in Juju’s garage. However, with the electronic synths and foot-stomping bassline, ‘Melt Into The Sun’ is less Patti Smith and more Marina and the Diamonds.

Sure, Candy Says’ sound is a departure from the winning formulation Little Fish had mastered. But isn’t that something to celebrate? After all, creativity encourages development and innovation. Juju cries, “everybody turn back time and start all over”, perhaps alluding to this new identity; a refreshed sound and a rejuvenated image. Candy Says are running from “that quiet place”. They are out to make a scene and 2013 can expect to see the band’s journey continue to unfold and further evolve, creating music which is respectful of old Little Fish fans whilst enticing the new.

Laura Hand

SIMON BATTEN

‘Unsettled Weather’

(*Own label*)

Simon Batten has previously fronted blues-rock groups and been involved in electronica acts Test Pilot and Dr Robotnik. This is his first solo album but any expectations conjured by that background get dashed from the first note. This well-titled CD is a long, highly polished and intense journey through a landscape that veers from Americana around the world to the recognisable influence of Oxford and the Catweazle night, from which it emerged.

The songs are driven by the percussive waves of acoustic guitar sometimes employed by Australian bands, overlaid with drums, bass, piano and keyboards. The vocals hang over proceedings like a kind of running commentary, often heavily treated with echo and sometimes backed by Gregorian-type chanting, so the often obtuse lyrics tend to wash over the listener. The

had: the lyric-free build-up of ‘In The Branches Of Yggdrasil’; the sparse IDM soundscape of ‘Nice Riff, Clichard’, or the album’s highlight of a two-minute meditation around a deconstructed riff during ‘I’ll Take The Minute Snake’. Such experimentation outside the familiarity suggested by much of the album is a good sign; and listening to the rest of the album, it’s still possible to distil the complex guitar work into a second layer of melody which confirms that, at their core, This Town Needs Guns have ability in excess to create fantastic, catchy tunes.

There’s a sense of tension exposed in several ways here: the odd semi-conceptual album conceit that doesn’t seem to carry its concept through; the struggle between comfortable reliability and edgy exploration; the songs themselves, which sound rather more hurt and bare than on previous releases. Pleasingly, it’s this tension that helps to edge ‘13.0.0.0.0’ beyond ‘good’ and into ‘great’; growing and moving on isn’t always easy, but it can be rewarding, and the album confirms this more and more with every listen.

Simon Minter

whole album is meticulously put together, the arrangements and production as professional as many a major label release, and before long you can’t help but get lost in the strange, dream-like world it creates. Hopeless as background music, it demands your full attention in brave opposition to a world where music is too often the soundtrack for running, travelling or some other multitasking activity.

Apart from the Antipodean influence, one of the few discernible reference points is The Durutti Column, the avant-garde Manchester band and Factory Records stalwarts, particularly in the piano and use of female guest vocalists, in this case Ditte Elly Goard and Rosie Caldecott. The latter brings a pleasing lullaby refrain to ‘By The River’ and adds some welcome colour and lightness to proceedings.

‘The Wanderers’ is typical in building up in an entirely unhurried way, almost echoing court music from the time of Henry VIII. Elsewhere we could be in the 1970s and elements of prog – even the ghost of Jethro Tull rears its head – but still executed with a refreshing contemporary twist.

Seventy minutes is a long time to ask of a listener in a world of diminishing attention spans, but this is an unusual album that fully deserves the investment.

Art Lagun



G I G G U I D E

FRIDAY 1st
THE DALE WATSON BAND + THE SHAPES: The Bullingdon – Vintage country from cult hero Watson – *see main preview*
JIM LOCKEY & THE SOLEMN SUN: The Jericho Tavern – Folk-inclined stadium rocking from Mr Lockey and band, on tour to promote new album ‘Death’.
SKYLARKIN SOUND SYSTEM: The Cellar – Rising north London six-piece General Roots are the star turn at tonight’s Skylarkin club night with a fusion of dancehall, reggae and lovers rock, having previously toured with Laid Blak and Gentlemen’s Dub Club. Trojan Soundsystem lynchpin Earl Gatehead is guest DJ, alongside Count Skylarkin.
SWITCH featuring KIDNAP KID + GORGON CITY: O2 Academy – a double dose of Black Butter Records artists at the O2’s

Friday 1st
THE DALE WATSON BAND: The Bullingdon
More high-quality Americana courtesy of the reliably excellent Empty Room Promotions folks tonight with the visit of travelling troubadour Dale Watson, self-styled guardian of authentic vintage country and a man who’s become a long-standing critics favourite and cult concern for the vitality he’s brought to traditional sounds. Having escaped childhood poverty in Texas through music – he was playing clubs from the age of twelve – Watson has frequently relocated, from LA, where he was part of the legendary Palomino Club’s house band, to Nashville and on to Austin, he’s become a recognisably tattooed figure of fiercely independent standing against the glossy modernisation of country music. Along the way he’s developed a style he calls Ameripolitan whose roots lie in classic country, rockabilly and truck driving songs. While he’s possibly more successful in the UK and around Europe, his enviable back catalogue, dating back to the early-90s and including most recent album ‘Sun Sessions’, has earned him a small army of dedicated fans at home and abroad.



FEBRUARY

new weekly electronic dance night – *see main preview*
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with LES CLOCHARDS + MOIETY + GREEN CHILDREN OF THE WOLFPIT: The Wheatshaeaf – Klub Kak’s monthly outing features Francophile folk-rockers Les Clochards, mixing Parisian café pop with classic 60s rock’n’roll. They’re joined by rustic folk-pop types Moiety and traditional folksters Green Children of the Wolfpit.
PHIL MCMINN + JORDAN O’SHEA + MY CROOKED TEETH: Art Jericho – Delicately proportioned pop treats in the refined environs of Art Jericho. Phil McMinn bares his soul in rarefied acoustic pop style, alongside elegantly atmospheric fella Jordan O’Shea, and gentle-natured country and folk chap My Crooked Teeth.
STEAMROLLER: The Red Lion, Cropredy – Heavy duty electric blues-rock from the local veterans.
BREEZE: The Duke’s Cut – Lively covers from the Duke’s Cut regulars.
JONNY DARE + THE OH SO MANY + AFTER THE THOUGHT: The Port Mahon – Twinkly, lightweight math-pop from Jonny Dare, plus folk-inclined indie pop from The Oh So Many and glitchy ambient electronic soundscaping from After The Thought.
TOKYO FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon
DISCO MUTANTE: The Library – Cosmic disco, funk, electro-boogie and acid house session.

SATURDAY 2nd
THE HOODOO CLUB with POLICE DOG HOGAN + SWINDLESTOCK: The Cellar – Launch night for the Cellar’s new Americana, bluegrass, old time and country night. One of the stars of last year’s Cornbury Festival, Police Dog Hogan’s lively, humorous, urbanised take on bluegrass and Cajun is equal parts fun and funny. Support comes from local Americana and country stompers Swindlestock. Followed by UK garage, 2 step and bassline club night What You Call It Garage.
PROSPEKT + SOMNUS + KOMRAD + DKH + I CRIED WOLF: The Wheatshaeaf – Buried in Smoke metal night with a proggy edge. Local champs Prospekt take inspiration from Dream Theatre, Opeth and Rush for their elaborate, dynamic tech-metal sound, while Komrad fuse awkward time signatures and proggy diversions onto blitzkrieg noise, partway between Dillinger and King Crimson. Bristol’s Somnus, meanwhile stick to the hard, fast and damn dirty route with their thrash, death and black-metal mash-up.
PHIL GARVEY: Magic Café, Magdalen

Road (1pm) – Lunchtime show from the Wittstock stalwart.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Cricketers Arms, Temple Cowley – First outing of the month for the local blues-rock stalwart.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy – Weekly three clubs in one, with indie at Propaganda; kitsch pop, glam and 80s at Trashy and dancefloor favourites from Jack FM’s guest DJs.
SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.

SUNDAY 3rd
BEARD OF DESTINY + THE ACCORDION CREW + DANNY KAYE + MOON RABBIT: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free acoustic session.
RED CEILIDH: The Bullingdon – Folk dance with an alternative twist.

MONDAY 4th
CHILDISH THINGS MUSIC NIGHT: The New Theatre – After a series of highly successful comedy and music nights over the past few years, the annual Childish Things fundraiser for Helen & Douglas House Hospice introduces a dedicated live music show to its roster. KT Tunstall returns to the New Theatre stage, having helped with the fundraising previously. Loveably soulful songsmith and raconteur Newton Faulkner joins the fun, alongside our own Stornoway, who play an acoustic set; off-kilter rockers Bug Prentice, featuring Ally Craig, and Charlotte Myerson. Rob Brydon hosts the night.
THE BILLY WALTON BAND: The Jericho Tavern – Blues-rock in the vein of Hendrix, Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughan from the New Jersey guitarist, who has played around his local scene since his early teens, jamming with Springsteen, Gary US Bonds and Double Trouble along the way.
BILLY THE KID + JORDAN O’SHEA: The Cellar – Canadian singer-songwriter Billy The Kid heads out on his Long Way From Home tour, having collaborated with Garth Hudson, Randy Cooke and Ringo Starr.
PATRICK WOLF: St John the Evangelist, Iffley Road – Beard Museum host an acoustic show from cult singer and multi-instrumentalist Wolf, a regular visitor to Oxford over the years and currently celebrating the tenth anniversary of his debut album, ‘Lycanthropy’, with a double retrospective album, ‘Sundark and Riverlight’, featuring acoustic rereading of songs from across his eclectic career, taking in romantic folk, electro-pop and classical music.

TUESDAY 5th
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz every Tuesday, tonight with club regulars The New Jazz Collective.

OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue – Catweazle’s newborn sibling club hosts local singers, poets and more every Tuesday.

WEDNESDAY 6th
LEDDRA CHAPMAN: The Jericho Tavern – Fluffy, soft-centred acoustic pop from the Essex singer-songwriter, set to follow up her 2009 debut album, ‘Telling Tales’, which saw her compared to Joni Mitchell and Alanis Morissette.
GURP + MASIRO + DIRTY SWEET LIES: The Wheatshaeaf – Moshka club night with trashy punk-pop boozers Gurp; instrumental tech-core duo Masiro; rockers Dirty Sweet Lies, plus a very special guest who we’re forbidden to tell you about doing a warm-up show. Oh yes.
FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass, hip hop and dubstep club night.

THURSDAY 7th
ANDA UNION: St. John the Evangelist – Oxford Contemporary Music presents a spectacular display of ancient Mongolian music, collected and reinterpreted by Anda Union – last seen in the UK at WOMAD festival – combining massed strings and percussion to evoke the traditions of their homeland.

Fridays 1st / 8th / 15th / 22nd
SWITCH: O2 Academy
It’s taken a while but Fridays once again means dance night at the O2 with the launch of new electro and house night Switch. Aiming to showcase the best upcoming house, drum&bass, electro and future garage acts, February’s line-up is a good springboard. The 1st features **Kidnap Kid** and **Gorgon City** from **Black Butter Records**, the label that’s been scooping award after award, including Best Small Label at last year’s AIM Awards. On the 8th it’s the turn of Colombian producer **Moska**, whose fresh take on dirty Dutch house has seen him producing Calvin Harris. There’s heavyweight glitch-house and crunked-up bass from Bristolian duo Will Weeks and Jim Bastow, aka **Koan Sound (pictured)**, on the 15th, the pair having moved away from their early dubstep sound lately, having previously toured with Skrillex and Diplo, while the 22nd sees Surrey’s **Disclosure** – sibling duo Guy and Howard Lawrence – taking centre stage. After supporting SBTRKT and Hot Chip, they’ve become festival faves and hit the Top 40 with their ‘Latch’ single last year.



TURL STREET ARTS FESTIVAL LAUNCH with DEATH SHANTIES + MARVELLOUS MEDICINE + LOS CAMPESINOS! DJs: The Cellar – The Cellar hosts the arts festival’s launch party, with live sounds from multi-media free jazz collective Death Shanties and funky reggae crew Marvellous Medicine, plus a DJ set from indie stars Los Campesinos!
STRENGTH OF THE BEAR: The Bullingdon – Alt.rocking from the local band featuring former members of Verbal Kink et al.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest running and best open mic club night continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets and performance artists from around Oxford, as well as regular national and international guests.
CHRIS RYDER: The Port Mahon – Acoustic folk and rock from the local singer-songwriter, tonight launching his ‘Black & Blue’ EP.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatshaeaf – Free unplugged set in the downstairs bar from the local blues-rock faves.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 8th
JESS HALL + AGS CONNOLLY + ERICA CONWAY: The Port Mahon – Tertium Quid teams up with Irregular Folk for a night of acoustic roots music. Airily exotic local songstress Jess Hall is joined by cellist Barney Morse-Brown and We Aeronauts’ James Cunning for her headline set. There’s star-spangled traditional country folk from Ags Connolly and ‘Blue’-era Joni Mitchell-styled acoustic folk from Erica Conway.
SWITCH featuring MOSKA: O2 Academy – Dutch house and progressive house from the Colombian producer at the O2’s new electronic dance night – *see main preview*
BOSSAPHONIC: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Afrobeat, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu-jazz club night, including a live set from London-based eight-piece Congo Dia Ntota, with their horn-heavy fusion of rumba, makossa, zouk and sakade rhythms.
THE CHEESEGRATERS: The Bullingdon – Crazy covers and gratuitous kazoo usage.
TOKYO FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon
PROGRESSIVELY LESS ELEPHANT: Baby Love – Indie, soul and electronica club night.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: Prince of Wales, Horspath Road
STEAMROLLER: The Crooked Pot

SATURDAY 9th
MOTHER CORONA: The Wheatshaeaf – High-density groove and psychedelic rocking from Mother Corona, tempering their massed Sabbath and Kyuss-style riffage with Stooges-style garage noise and Smashing Pumpkins melody.
THE MECHANISMS + POCKETWATCH: The Cellar – An Oxford steampunk soiree with theatrical collective The Mechanisms airing their space-pirate sci-fi opera ‘Ulysses Dies At Dawn’, based on Homer’s The Odyssey. Dark, orchestral folk from Pocketwatch in support. Followed by techno, bass and house club night Extra Curricular.



Wednesday 13th
BELLOWHEAD: The New Theatre
One of Nightshift’s many, many eulogies to Bellowhead simply surmised that it’s impossible to leave one of their gigs without having had a good time. And that’s the most important thing you need to know about the band – a massed ensemble formed by Oxfordshire folk scene veterans John Spiers and Jon Boden, with the intention of reviving several centuries of traditional folk music and reforming into a frenzy of theatre and dance. From their live debut at Oxford Folk Festival in 2004, to their now legendary Truck Festival show in 2010 and onwards to international fame and acclaim via a succession of BBC Folk awards for Best Live Band, Bellowhead are first and foremost entertainers. While their love and respect for everything from Napoleonic ballads and Jacques Brel to classic English folk dance is core to their appeal, they’re far from po-paced custodians of a by-gone age, taking in New Orleans jazz, township jive and even a hint of punk as they cartwheel through the centuries, gay abandon an equal partner to musical virtuosity. “Traditional music has always been about communal experience,” said Boden in the band’s interview with Nightshift a couple of years back, and Bellowhead definitely practise what they preach.

WE AERONAUTS + THE FAMILY MACHINE + RAINBOW RESERVOIR: Modern Art Oxford – Pindrop Performance show with sweetly orchestral indie-folksters We Aeronauts celebrating their hundredth gig. They’re joined by wistfully wonderful popstrels The Family Machine and quirky singer-pianist Rainbow Reservoir, recalling Moldy Peaches and Jeffrey Lewis.
THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + SWINDLESTOCK + SERIOUS TYPES DJs: The Big Bang, Oxford Castle – Classics 1930s hot jazz, cider and sausages collide as TORFSB launch their own-brand fermented apple drink at the renowned banger



Thursday 14th

EVERYTHING EVERYTHING: O2 Academy

A time traveller from today going back to the mid-1980s would have been laughed into the nearest asylum if they'd claimed the predominant influences on early 21st Century cool pop would be Hall & Oates, Nik Kershaw, Level 42 and Tears For Fears. After which, people might have held each close and tearfully enquired, "what if it turns out to be true?" And so it's come to pass. From our own Foals and Chad Valley to the likes of Everything Everything, 80s electro-soul is considered valid treasure to be rescued from the depths of local charity shops and carefully snuck through Radiohead and modern r'n'b filters. Which is a bit worrying in theory if you lived through those dark days first time round, but not nearly as bad as you might have imagined in practice. Everything Everything's Mercury-nominated debut, 'Man Alive', came armed with almost too many clever ideas that sometimes eclipsed the tunes, and they do have the occasional tendency towards stadium-sized indie melancholy, but amid the overly busy complexity, there's also playfulness and some great pop tunes. But really kids, if a stranger ever offers to play you a Level 42 album, just run. Run as fast as you can and never look back.

palace in the Oxford Castle Complex.

**PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM
DJs: O2 Academy**
I LOVE THE 90s: The Bullingdon – 90s dance tunes.
MATHEW SADLER: Magic Café, Magdalen Road (1pm)

SUNDAY 10th

MODESTEP: O2 Academy – Stadium-pleasing, festival-pumping dubstep-cum-electro-rock from the London types, as at home playing Download and Reading Festival as the club circuit. Are we meant to blame Pendulum or Skrillex?
TROPHY WIFE + RHOSYN + SALVATION BILL + NEW CARNIVAL + JORDAN O'SHEA: Truck Store (1pm) – A full afternoon of live music to celebrate Truck Store's second birthday. Top-drawer local bill includes airy electro-tinged indie stars Trophy Wife and inventively rocking string quartet Rhosyn. Go along, have fun, listen to great music and maybe buy some stuff – help keep Oxford's only independent record shop alive and kicking.

MONDAY 11th

THE PAUL COX BAND: The Jericho Tavern – Gritty, energetic blues, soul and r'n'b from the veteran Wolverhampton singer, and former member of John Slaughter's band, at the Famous Monday Blues.

TUESDAY 12th

LITTLE MIX: The New Theatre – Soul-scouring death-metal and industrial gabba mayhem from the radical Berlin-based collecti... oh sod it, you know who they are. *X-Factor*. Simon Cowell. Crucifixion of Damien Rice's 'Cannonball. That sort of stuff. Eat up, drones.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Live jazz from The Hugh Turner Band.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night.
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue

WEDNESDAY 13th

BELLOWHEAD: The New Theatre – Party time, folk style with the mighty award-winning big band – *see main preview*
KODALINE: The Jericho Tavern – Epic melancholy in a post-Coldplay style from Dublin's non-threatening indie rockers, whose video for their single 'All I Want' has been watched about eleventy trillion times and provoked a veritable ocean of lady tears. Can we just have a war or something and end all this excitement?
SUBVERSE presents FLORI: The Cellar – House, garage, techno and bass club night.

THURSDAY 14th

EVERYTHING EVERYTHING: O2 Academy – 21st Century electro-soul, 1985 style – *see main preview*
ART CLASSSINK + THE METHOD: Truck Store – Instore sets from local alt.rockers Artclasssink and young Bicester rockers The Method.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: The Wheatsheaf – Valentine's Day hoedown in the downstairs bar with the local bluegrass and Americana faves.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 15th

CASH: O2 Academy – Tribute to Johnny Cash.
SWITCH featuring KOAN SOUND: O2 Academy – Heavyweight glitch-house from Bristolian duo Will Weeks and Jim Bastow at tonight's Switch – *see main preview*
HOWLING BELLS: The Jericho Tavern – Brooding indie-country from the Aussie ex-pats – *see main preview*
THE BIG TEN INCH with BLACK KAT BOPPERS + JAZZMAN GERALD: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin's monthly celebration of vintage rocking tonight hosts Southampton's doo-wop, jump-jive and rockabilly outfit Black Kat Boppers, harking back to the dirty roots sounds of Johnny Burnette, Gene Vincent,

Johnny Cash and The Shakin' Pyramids. Jazzman Records honcho Gerald Short spins rare shellac alongside club host Count Skylarkin.

UNDERSMILE + X1 + AGNESS PIKE: The Wheatsheaf – Tectonic uber-doom from the mighty Undersmile, brewing influences like Earth, Swans and Melvins into what sounds like a spectral moan from the cellar of a haunted dolls house. They're joined by visceral hardcore merchants X1 and theatrical thrash crew Agness Pike.
VERY NICE HARRY + THE DRAKES: Truck Store – Double dose of local guitar pop instore.
THE WITTSTOCK WEEKENDER: The Hollybush, Osney – Opening evening of a weekend of free live music in aid of this year's Wittstock Festival, with donations and raffles raising cash. Tonight's show features kooky posters Mammoth & The Drum, metallers De-Mask Thyself and prog-core monsters Komrad.
STEVE RODGERS + OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS: The Bullingdon – Son of Paul Rodgers and former guitarist with Boa, Steve Rodgers returns from a tour of Canada with a new EP.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: James

Friday 15th

HOWLING BELLS: The Jericho Tavern

Having made their reputation with their excellent eponymous debut album on Bella Union back in 2006 and subsequently supported the likes of Coldplay, Snow Patrol, Placebo, Editors, Mercury Rev and The Killers, it seems slightly strange that Howling Bells aren't a bigger proposition than they are seven years on. Having relocated to London from their native Sydney, the long, cold English winters left their mark on the band, becoming increasingly brooding as they melded country with the gloomier end of the indie spectrum, Juanita Stein's breathy, kittenish vocals lending the band a sound that found them compared to The Velvet Underground, Mazzy Star and even Cowboy Junkies early on. Prone to label hopping, their second album for Independiente was more polished and synthetic, which is where the criticism started. Their third, 'The Loudest Engine', this time for Cooking Vinyl, was a better effort for the most part, leaning towards a more psychedelic pop sound, but still awash with uplifting misery, and with a new album due, a return to early form and an upturn in fortunes are surely due.



Street Tavern – Bluegrass, country and Americana from the local regulars.
SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – House and techno club night.

SATURDAY 16th

SKELETOR with META-STASIS + K-LACURA + THE CRUSHING + LEST WE FORGET + PITCH BLACK SUMMER: O2 Academy – Seriously extreme metal at Skeletor's monthly riff-fest in the shape of London's Meta-stasis, gorehounds fermenting an evil brew of death, thrash and grindcore. Or, in their own words, psycho-tech-death-neg beat-industrial-lunatics. Local support comes from metal-core crew K-Lacura; thrash merchants The Crushing and hardcore newcomers Pitch Black Summer.
THE WITTSTOCK WEEKENDER: The Hollybush, Osney (2pm) – Full day of free live music in aid of Wittstock Festival. Among today's highlights are Bicester indie band The Method; southern gothic acoustic popsters Welcome To Peepworld; punk-pop thrashers Gurg; agit-punks Junkie Brush; theatrical thrash metallers Agness Pike; folk-rockers The Hawkhurst; Pixies-style grungers Von Braun and heavyweight blues-rockers Reservoir Cats.
MOSHKA: The Wheatsheaf – Local bands night.
FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – Wonky disco, house and breaks with FOTB regulars.
MAEVE BAYTON: Magic Café, Magdalen Road (1pm) – Blues and ballads from the local songstress.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy
TOKYO FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon – Friday's club night takes a holiday on Saturday.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Red Lion, Eynsham

SUNDAY 17th

THE LABEL PROFILE SESSIONS with BRAINLOVE RECORDS: The Cellar – First night of a new club at the Cellar, each month profiling a different indie label. Tonight it's the turn of Brainlove, home to Bleeding Heart Narrative, Pagan Wanderer Lu and We Aeronauts among others. Iceland's Oyama headline, alongside Mat Riviere, plus a DJ set from label boss John Rogers.
THE WITTSTOCK WEEKENDER: The Hollybush, Osney (2pm) – Third day of the Wittstock fundraiser, with sets from space cake psychedelic wyrd-jazz rockers The Goggenheim, alongside feisty punk-poppers Traps, as well as Natural Occurrences & The Brainmen, Firegazers, Chris Grant and Reckless Sleepers.
MAEVE BAYTON + SIOBHAN McCLUSKY + TOMMO: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm) – Free afternoon of acoustic music with the Klub Kakofanny crew, including a set from local blues'n'ballads songstress Maeve Bayton.

MONDAY 18th

DELPHIC: O2 Academy – Back in town for the first time since 2009, Manchester's club-friendly indie types prepare to release their second album, 'Collection', the follow-up to 2010's 'Acolytes'. Channelling several decades of their home city's musical heritage, Delphic draw straight lines between New Order's 'Brotherhood', Doves and the spirit of the Hacienda, taking in 808 State along the way. On record it's polite enough but comes to life more on stage. Having originally sounded like they were filling in a gap left by Klaxons' journey into the void, they've outlived that band and are possibly set for even bigger stages and brighter lights.
IAN PARKER: The Jericho Tavern – Return trip to the Famous Monday blues for the Brummie roots-rock singer and guitarist, owing as much to The Edge and Mark Knopfler as he does to the classic American blues tradition.
DOT'S FUNKY ODYSSEY: The Cellar – Funk and soul night.

TUESDAY 19th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Live jazz with The New Jazz Collective.
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue

WEDNESDAY 20th

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass, hip hop and dubstep.

THURSDAY 21st

JAKE BUGG: O2 Academy – The Trouble Town troubadour plays his sold-out Oxford debut – *see main preview*
FRED EAGLESMITH + AGS CONNOLLY: The Bullingdon – Alt. country, folk-rock and bluegrass from Ontario's veteran troubadour at tonight's Empty Room Promotions show, the ever-touring Eaglesmith bringing his tales of trucks, trains and tractors to town, counterpointing his typically downbeat stories of Canada's rural poor and unfortunates with comic monologues, which have earned him a small army of 'Fredheads' in his homeland and the US. Joining him tonight is local country songsmith Ags Connolly, evoking the down-home spirits of Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson.
PAWS: The Jericho Tavern – After putting in a star turn at last October's Gathering, Glasgow's raucous, cantankerous punk trio return to town, dead set on speed and musical destruction. Last time out they were enjoying an on-tour game of trying to play one particular song faster each night, and various audience members seemed to be employed to try and stop all their equipment falling apart mid-set. Somewhere along the line too many bands forgot that such things were the true spirit of punk rock.

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Thursday 21st

JAKE BUGG:

O2 Academy

Who'd have thought, a year back, that the brightest teenage pop breakthrough of 2012 would come not from *X-Factor* or The BRIT School, but via some dedicated low-key gigging and forward-thinking local radio patronage. But so it was, with Jake Bugg holding the top spot in the album charts for his eponymous debut and somehow managing to unite the *MOJO*-reading massive with their kids, and bringing the spirit of Lonnie Donegan to modern day council estates – skiffle-infused tales of pill-up nights out. Chuck in a whole heap of vintage rockabilly, beatnik folk and a dash of country, draw a line from Woody Guthrie to Lee Mayers, via Bob Dylan, and you've got the phenomenon that is young Jake, at eighteen years old and possessed of a great world-worn voice, a proverbial old head on young shoulders. Neither an exercise in cynical retro-fetishism or a lad stuck in a past he never knew, armed with songs like 'Trouble Town', 'Country Song' and the ubiquitous radio hit 'Lightning Bolt', Bugg's simply a fantastic pop-friendly remodelling of a sound that's timeless and classic for good reason.

SENSIBLE DANCEHALL presents **PON DE FLOOR: The Cellar** – Dancehall, soca, reggae, afrobeat, calypso, moombahton, hip hop and more at the monthly tropical party night.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Free unplugged set in the downstairs bar.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 22nd

SWITCH featuring **DISCLOSURE: O2 Academy** – Garage, house and post-dubstep from Surrey's sibling duo at tonight's Switch club – *see main preview*
IN ZANADU + IN YOUR HONOUR + SANCTIFY: The Bullingdon – It's All About The Music local bands night.
REEDS + DAMN VANDALS + CRACKERDUMMY + PLAYER2: The Wheatsheaf – Darkly-inclined alt.rock in the vein of The Godfathers, A House and Blue Aeroplanes from former Nightshift Demo of the Monthers Damn Vandals.
TOKYO FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon HQ: The Cellar – Cutting edge drum&bass club night with Marcus Intalex bringing his soulful take on d&b to the decks.

SATURDAY 23rd

BLASTED + DESERT STORM + WAR WOLF + BEARD OF ZEUSS: The Cellar – Buried In Smoke metal night with the return to Oxford of former-Winnebago Deal chap Ben Perrier with his new band Blasted, whose name suggests he hasn't developed a love for Coldplay-style indie balladry lately. They're fresh from touring with The Bronx and should be all set to dish out some serious cranial damage. Support from stoner/blues metal heavyweights Desert Storm; ex-Dopefight types War Wolf, and sludgy stoner-metallers Beard Of Zeuss.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with TRAPS + GRANT SHARKEY + RAG DOLL: The Wheatsheaf – GTI's monthly mixed bag of live sounds, tonight with soulful rockers Traps, leaning towards the Skunk Anansie scheme of things, alongside singer and double bassist Grant Sharkey, balancing his songs between touching and hilarious, plus breezy, sophisticated folksters Rag Doll, in the vein of Edie Reader.
CO-PILGRIM + OWEN TROMANS + BILLY T'RIVERS: Modern Art Oxford – Sunshiny alt.country-tinged pop from former-Black Nielsen chap Mike Gale, now teamed up with Truck/Dreaming Spires fella Joe Bennett in Co-Pilgrim, the duo's debut album, 'A Fairer Sea', produced by Mark Gardener.
PETE GALPIN REMEMBRANCE CONCERT: Risinghurst Community Centre – Maeve Bayton, Headington Hillbillies, Blues Rumour and The Wainrides are among a host of local bands playing tribute to the late Pete 'Mr Chillout' Galpin, the veteran blues, jazz and folk musician who passed away last year. All proceeds will go to the Mesothelioma Trust.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy – Tonight's triple club night whammy features a live set from Coventry's lustily militant indie punks The Enemy, kicking it out in the tradition of The Clash, The Jam and The Libertines.

SANDRA SHALLIS: Magic Café, Magdalen Road (1pm) –Lunchtime show from the accordionist.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: James Street Tavern

HODGE PODGE: The Bullingdon

SUNDAY 24th

UFO: O2 Academy – The heavy rock behemoths continue to bring the noise, with original members Phil Mogg and Andy Parker still helming proceedings, the band playing favourites from their 1970s commercial peak albums, 'No Heavy Petting', 'Phenomenon' and 'Lights Out', as well as their recent twentieth outing, 'Seven Deadly'.
CHURCH OF THE HEAVY: The Bullingdon – The Bully's monthly metal night with local acts DeMask Thyself and Empire Divided.

MONDAY 25th

WOODEN HORSE: The Jericho Tavern – Americana and country blues, replete with harmonies, slide guitar, stomp box, banjo and

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harmonica from the West Midlands duo at tonight's Famous Monday Blues.

TUESDAY 26th

FIDLAR: O2 Academy – Primitive, brute-simple garage-punk and rockabilly rumble from LA's Fidler (the name's an acronym for something rude and they've got a chorus that simply goes "I drink cheap beer, so what, fuck you"), inspired by the likes of Black Flag and The Germs as well as The Cramps. They've toured with The Hives and are now Wichita labelmates with The Bronx, so some no-nonsense two-chord rock action is very much the order of the day. And if that don't appeal, Fidler have doubtless got some choice words for you and your lily-livered musical tastes.
LINDI ORTEGA: The Jericho Tavern – Soulful country from Toronto's answer to Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris, re-establishing her solo credentials after touring as backing singer to Brandon Flowers.

UNFATHOMABLE RUINATION + CRANIATION + MERIHIM: The Wheatsheaf – After last month's debut show with Cerebral Bore, Slave To The Grind deliver another uncompromising dose of metal brutality. Tonight's bright, shiny treats include London's intense, brutal death-metallers Unfathomable Ruination, inspired by the likes of Internal Suffering, Death and Dying Fetus and now out on a headline tour to promote debut album 'Misshapen Congenital Entropy', which features guest vocals from Coldplay's Chris Martin. Possibly. Bristol's death-core crews Craniation and Merihim support
MR GRUFF presents ALIX PEREZ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night with groundbreaking producer and DJ Alix Perez from Shogun Audio playing a 90-minute set. He's joined by Teknikal, Subtex and Rufus.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With The Hugh Turner Band.
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue

WEDNESDAY 27th

MAMA ROSIN: The Jericho Tavern – Fresh from supporting Bellowhead on their last UK tour, Swiss trio Mama Rosin bring their rough'n'ready brew-up of Bayou blues, Cajun, zydeco and rock'n'roll to town.
SUBVERSE presents ALEX COULTON: The Cellar – House, garage, techno and bass club night.

THURSDAY 28th

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC ACOUSTIC CLUB: The Bullingdon – Unplugged sets from Stuart Noah, Lewis Newcombe-Jones, Sharang Sharma, The Lost Art and Joshua Burnham.
OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS: The Wheatsheaf – Free acoustic set from veteran local songsmith Ospey in the downstairs bar.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre


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A black and white photograph of a male musician with long, wavy hair, captured in a dynamic performance. He is wearing a dark, long-sleeved shirt and is singing intensely into a microphone, his mouth wide open. His right hand is positioned near the microphone, while his left hand is on the neck of a white electric guitar. The guitar has a distinctive shape with a white pickguard and a dark fretboard. The background is dark, with a bright, out-of-focus light source visible on the left side, creating a high-contrast, dramatic effect. In the top left corner, the word "LIVE" is printed in large, bold, white capital letters within a black rectangular box.

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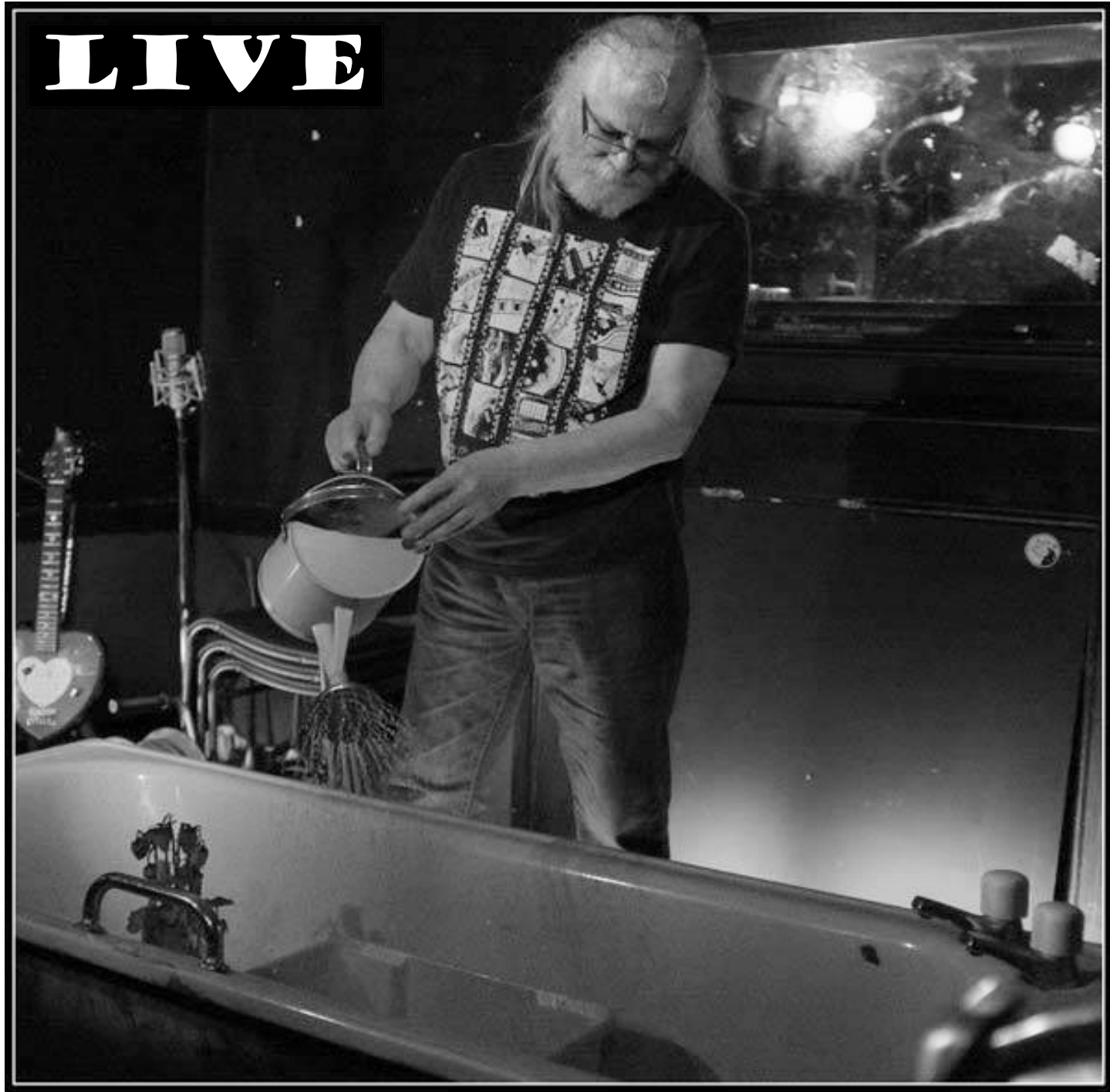


photo: Pier Corona

IAN STAPLES / JACK GOLDSTEIN / MICHAEL THOMPSON / MAX LEVY / ROO BHASIN: A NIGHT OF JOHN CAGE

The Port Mahon

It doesn't start well. Jack Goldstein's introduction to this John Cage centenary concert contains the word "crazy" at least three times. The composer may have been many things, good and bad, but crazy isn't one of them, and we're concerned that nodding to Cage might have become another safely wacky lifestyle choice, like Jaegerbombs or Movember. Luckily the performances steer clear of unnecessary theatricality, and the players seem to be honestly interested in Cage's approach.

Ian Staples' opening guitar improvisations might not be exactly "Derek Bailey craziness" (thanks, Jack), but they do feature some Bailey-esque jarring chords and dampened scrabbles, although some of the best moments are when he drops in tiny hints of roadhouse boogie, the ghost of the blues lurking from the fog. His performance of 'Water Walk', a piece that involves ostensibly non-musical activities such as mixing a drink and turning on radios, is fascinating because we can't see past the throng to the stage,

so we have to take all sounds on their own merits, which is about the Cagiest thing going; oh, and because someone brought a bathtub up the Port's stairs. A performance of 'Inlets' is less interesting, because the sounds of fire and water are more easily assimilated mentally, and exhibit the "sonic nature ramble" side of Buddhist and mycologist Cage that we've never been drawn to. And although it's not meant to be laughed at, the famed '4'33', like most conceptual art, has the structure if not intention of a gag,

and as such, fades with repeated exposure. Half the audience go home after having ticked off "that one without any music", but those who remain hear the evening's highlight, in which Max 'King Of Cats' Levy reads extracts from Cage's narrative lecture 'Indeterminacy', accompanied – or perhaps infiltrated – by electronic and *concrete* sounds from Goldstein and his Fixers colleague Roo Bhasin. The sententious air of the texts, and Levy's wonderfully stately, wry intonation make it sound like a stand-up set by Woody Allen's zen cousin in the corner of Delia Derbyshire's workshop. Like the best of Cage's work it's both thoughtful and almost avuncularly warm, and half the audience are in the bar. Crazy. *David Murphy*

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

The New Theatre

Last time Rufus Wainwright played Oxford the first half of the show consisted of him performing the entirety of his last album, 'All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu', without allowing applause between songs. So it's safe to say I'm wondering what to expect tonight; will it be more of the same, or reminiscent of his earlier light-hearted performances? I'm of course hoping for the latter, especially given his most recent record 'Out of the Game' was a return to form, but you just never know with Rufus.

The night starts well with a lovely set from Teddy Thompson; just him, a guitar and some very pretty tunes. Then the eccentricity begins with Adam Cohen – yes, he's the son of Leonard and he won't let us forget it, even performing a karaoke-esque version of his father's 'So Long, Marianne', but unfortunately that's the high point of his set; while he's inherited a good voice from his father, unfortunately the same can't be said for his songwriting skills.

Then, Rufus – never one to blend in – takes to the stage dressed, he tells us, as Rupert the Bear in bright yellow plaid trousers and a red waistcoat. He has a full band with him (including Teddy) along with some backing singers, and sticks to a lot of the new album but makes sure to include a decent selection of older songs too, much to the audience's delight. There are a few covers as well – 'Everybody Knows' by Leonard Cohen (which sees Adam reappear on stage to help out, wearing what appears to be a priest's outfit), and two of Rufus' late mother Kate McGarrigle's songs, performed by Teddy and backing singer Krystle

Warren. There's no doubt that 'The Art Teacher' is the set highlight tonight; as the band leave Rufus and the piano on their own, his voice shines in an especially stunning rendition.

The encore is brilliantly bizarre and features a man dressed as Cupid; Rufus as a Greek god and a stage invasion from the first few rows for a rendition of 'Gay Messiah', with a giant foam sandwich (I'm not making this up). It's great to see Wainwright is taking himself less seriously these days, and he certainly knows how to put on a show.

Emily Bruce

FRAGMENT / EYE FOR AN EYE / EYES OF EVE / STORMBRINGER

The Wheatsheaf

There's an enthusiastic but minimal crowd gathered in the Sheaf for Northamptonshire headbangers Stormbringer's opening set, and what a mistake those who showed up later have made. A listen through to a handful of songs on Facebook earlier were by no means awful but fail to move me, but in a live setting, the band bring their monstrous riffs and catchy vocal hooks to fantastic, energetic life. Vocalist Mike Stockley's erratic stage moves are less impressive, but prove to be a minor (and, by the end of the set, almost endearing) niggle in what is otherwise a superb start to the night.

Next up are local stoner-doom crew Eyes of Eve, who draw by far the biggest crowd of the night, and

once they start playing, its easy to see why. Like Stormbringer, they are all about riffs, and theirs are colossal. Their presence on stage is both familiar and relaxed, and they play with grins on their faces and an enthusiasm that permeates the crowd almost immediately, and completely dominates the room.

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, and while this kind of sentiment could put music magazines like this one completely out of business, I truly believe that the easiest way to describe the music of Swindon's Eye For An Eye is simply to look at them: a band of large, hairy men. This places them at the heart of a crowded genre, with plenty of fantastic (and hairy) bands like Black Label Society and Godsized to contend with, and at times during Eye For An Eye's set, I question whether they have the charisma to stand up against acts like these. With a littering of technical issues, I get the impression they're not having the best gig of their lives, yet they still aren't half bad.

By the time local headliners Fragment hit the stage, The Wheatsheaf has returned to the same state of near-emptiness that met Stormbringer earlier in the night. Fragment are rather incongruous on tonight's Buried In Smoke line-up; as the self-stylized "only real death metal band in Oxford", they seem an odd choice to headline a night of stoner/doom, and yet they rise to the challenge with gusto, reminding the remainder of the crowd just how brutal they are. Through no fault of their own, at times Joe Andrews's frenzied double bass drumming drowns out the rest of the band a little, but despite this, it's clear that these protectors of death metal in Oxford are more than up to the task.

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DR SHOTOVER: Godspeed, You Blank Envelope
 Greetings, worms. What’s that? You like the 80s sweatbands? Buy me a drink and I will explain all. Having grazed to excess over the festive feast-fest, I got a severe talking-to from my personal trainer ‘Spanish Tony’ Sanchez (whom I bumped into at Fondles Nightclub’s celebrated 70s Drugs Night). “Ees time to push the envelope, Seenyor Doctor” said he. “What, like the ones full of strange white powder which YOU keep about your person for emergencies?” quipped I. Anyway, long story short, I subsequently found myself enrolled by my Hispanic Mr Motivator in the East Indies Club charity Fun Run. Being, ahem, a bit of a natural sportsman, I got off to a flying start, and was soon leading the pack of ne’er-do-wells, puffing along like a good’un in my novelty nicotine-coloured onesie... when up came Binky Bates on the inside lane, moving like a bullet from a f***ing gun. “How do, Binky”, said I. “See you later, loser”, said he with a bared-teeth snarl as he tripped me up and sent me sprawling ignominiously into the ditch - whence I gradually emerged, covered in fox droppings, while the ragged pack streamed past. Having put the ‘F.U.’ in F.U.N. R.U.N., Master Bates went on to win the race and be lauded, patted and fawned over by a crowd of pretty young charity groupies in crocheted leggings and rainbow jumpers. Meanwhile I was led off limping and cursing by Spanish Tony and plied with sprain liniment – served in a glass with plenty of tabasco sauce. Still, silver lining time... I had a bit of a chat with some of Spanish Tony’s Puerto Rican chums, and I gather that poor dear Binky will soon be suffering a terrible TERRIBLE accident in the Jungle Gym... then my day will surely come. Just wait till the Pogo-A-Gogo event next month in Horspath. I am already in [sniff]... training... just need to get my [sniff]... speed up...! [Dr S sprints five times round the club bar, then vanishes over the horizon, nose and legs running like the clappers]... Bye!



‘MORE SPEED, YOU FAT ELEPHANT!’: Dr S’s personal trainer keeps a close eye on the Fun Run

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INTRODUCING....

Dallas Don’t

Who are they?
 Punningly named after the Dallas Dhu distillery in Forres, Scotland, from where singer and guitarist Niall originates, Dallas Don’t are Brian (bass); Jen (guitar/vocals); Niall (vocals/guitar) and Yan (drums). The quartet met in Oxford three years ago, having all played separately in other bands elsewhere. With Niall’s strong Scottish accent at the forefront of their sound, Dallas Don’t are frequently thought of as a Scottish band, “but we don’t mind,” they say. After recording a brace of demos – the second of which was a Nightshift Demo Of The Month, they have played with The Cellar Family and This Town Needs Guns and Shiny Darkly, as well as last year’s Oxford Punt. They release their debut EP, ‘Retrace This Place’, in March.

What do they sound like?
 Serrated hardcore-friendly indie pop, with the emphasis on melody. The vocal interaction between Niall and Jen lends Dallas Don’t a sweeter edge, though these tunes carry a serious bite: “short, sharp shocks of caustic guitar shrapnel,” to borrow from a recent live review. Niall’s rich burr has found the band compared to Arab Strap and Prolapse on occasion. In their own words, they are “hard-edged, melodic, twisty indie rock, with songs that are actually about things.”

What inspires them?
 “Musically, trying to write interesting and engaging songs, that we can play loud and hard, while still clinging on to a bit of melody. The lyrical subject matter is drawn from all over – the new EP features songs about ancient Scottish witch trials; the life and mind of the 14th century Earl Alexander Stewart, aka The Wolf of Badenoch; memories of Findhorn Beach in Moray, and militant positivity in the face of regimented cynicism.”

Career highlight so far:
 “Halloween at the Port Mahon, with the Cellar Family and Agness Pike. Everyone dressed up, the gig was packed, and it was a brilliant night.”

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

Who’s this scrawny bunch of walking haircut disasters gracing the cover of February 1993’s *Curfew* magazine? **Radiohead**? Can’t say we’ve ever heard of them. Were they popular locally? Oh yes, just over a year on from enjoying their first front cover interview feature in *Curfew* as **On A Friday**, Thom, Jonny, Colin, Ed and Phil were back to talk about their new single, a pretty little ditty entitled ‘Anyone Can Play Guitar’. And how had they spent their time since we last chatted to them? “Snorting coke and learning to jack up,” according to Thom. They’d also been out on tour with **The Frank & Walters**, **Sultans of Ping FC**, **Kingmaker** and **Midway Still**, among others. Safe to say they went on to eclipse the lot of ‘em. Even as a support band, Radiohead were discovering that ‘Creep’ was being adopted as an anthem by audiences across the country, despite a lack of radio play (“Radio 1’s producers thought it was too miserable,”). Thom denied he was the “tortured soul” depicted in various reviews and interviews to date. “It’s just something for them to write about, isn’t it,” he shrugged. They were in good form and humour though, proclaiming that months of intensive touring, recording and rehearsals were “far less exhausting than having a 9-to-5 job,” though Thom admitted he went out and bought a box of plasters and taped them all over his flat after *NME* described Radiohead as “a lily-livered excuse for a rock band,” claiming the review “cut really deeply.” He also defended the decision to sign to Parlophone rather than an indie label, for which the band received a fair bit of flack back in the early days: “we’re not an indie band. We write

pop songs, but some people can’t see that.” Radiohead were off to America shortly after. The rest, as they say, is history.

10 YEARS AGO

“KILL THE BILL!” screamed the front page headline on February 2003’s *Nightshift*, but we hadn’t gone all murderous on the police’s arses. Instead we were rallying local gig goers to protest against the live music licensing bill, up before the House of Lords and threatening to add a whole heap of red tape and financial barriers to putting on gigs, while threatening pubs or shops with extortionate fines for hosting unlicensed live performances. If the current coalition government has done anything right, it’s stripping back such bureaucracy. Our main interview piece was with the mighty **Winnebago Deal**, proclaimed as “the sound of the unstoppable force colliding with the immovable object” for their savagely stripped-down, fuzzed-up brand of uber grunge metal. The duo had been on a non-stop gigging frenzy, earning them a 9/10 review in *Metal Hammer* and prompting Steve Lamacq to declare that “they makes every other garage rock band sound like Coldplay”. This month they were due to release a mini-album on Fierce Panda Records as well as being handpicked to support **Fugazi** in London. “We figured our music would appeal to maniacs, but we never expected the suits to get it,” declared singer/guitarist Ben Perrier of the major label interest surrounding the band, before proclaiming that “We’re thinking about becoming skinheads.” Also this month **Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia** released their second album, ‘My Elixir,

And the lowlight:
 “Our team going out in the group stages of the Oxford bands 6-a-side football tournament in June on goal difference. The standard was surprisingly high.”
Their favourite other
Oxfordshire act is:
 “The Cellar Family. They’re a bit frightening, in a really, really good way.”
If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
 “‘Doolittle’ by Pixies; it’s a huge influence and a cast iron classic.”
When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?
 “Our EP launch on Saturday 9th March at The Wheatsheaf. We’re co-running the show with Divine Schism, so the bill will be bands we love, and we’ll be pulling out all the stops to play our best set to date.”
Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
 “Favourite: the friendliness and support of the other local bands we’ve played with. And Truck Store. Least favourite: people don’t dance or move very much at gigs; it’s not like they’re not enjoying themselves, just a bit polite.”
You might love them if you love:
 Idlewild, The Pixies, Sonic Youth, Prolapse, Arab Strap, Hefner.
Hear them here:
dallasdont.tumblr.com



THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

Your Poison’, *Nightshift*’s review declaring it “a monument to both the band’s resilience in the face of their own chaotic existence and to the creative energy that exists between them. Brilliant.” **Kings Of Leon** made their first and only Oxford appearance this month. We seem to remember thinking they were shit. Not much has changed since on that score.

5 YEARS AGO

The Family Machine were a leaping and a tumbling on the front cover of February 2008’s front cover. Was that really five year ago? Don’t time fly when you’re having fun. Something The Family Machine most certainly were, even while they were singing songs about roadside tributes to fatal car accidents. Having been everyone’s favourite cuddly pet dog of a local band for a while, the quartet were set to release their debut album, ‘You Are The Family Machine’ on **Alcopop!** this month, and we declared it time to stop taking the band for granted and give them a turn centre stage, since the album was, in our own words, “a belter.” “It sounds like a cliché, but I’ve always believed that the song is the star,” said eternally self-effacing frontman Jamie Hyatt, before admitting that secretly he’d “love to be remembered with loads of flowers” if he should ever be wiped out in a traffic accident. Elsewhere **The X** in Cowley closed down after landlady Alison lost a court battle with the PRS over unpaid live music royalties, depriving east Oxford of one of its most individual small venues. Also closing down was **Avid Records** near Gloucester Green which, at the time, left Oxford without a single independent record store

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

THE AUGUST LIST

Chilly it is, minus-something and more coldness forecast, so we need something more than mere whisky and our unstinting sense of optimism to warm our spirits. And here it comes – The August List, a band named after what is, theoretically at least, a summer month. They’re a duo – a married couple hailing from Dorset, now relocated to rural Oxfordshire and playing what they describe as garage folk. That term doesn’t flatter them particularly, and anyway they’re more old-time bluegrass and country. Musically they share common ground with so many other great married couples of country, from Carter-Cash to The Handsome Family, notably a fantastic vocal interaction, Kerraleigh Child possessed of a great quavering voice not dissimilar at times to Dolly Parton, while hubbie Martin more than does his fair share of work without imposing himself. Together they keep it raw and simple, as on ‘Bird House Song’, capable of roadhouse stomp as well as breathy introspection (we get both on ‘Death Penalty’), and sweet balladeering, as on the softer ‘Homeland’, a more typical modern country piece that’s elevated by a vocal performance that summons more than the requisite amount of heartbreak. Best of the lot, though, is the duet ‘Forty Rod Of Lightnin’’, which sounds like it comes freshly pickled in some American backwood rather than genteel home counties, full of grit and soul, fire and fog. Lovely stuff; chuck another log on the fire and crack open that second bottle of single malt, why don’tcha.

DONKEY THE JACKET

Warm and comfortable in our log cabin in the company of The August List and several bottles of finest whisky, we feel no need to head out in to the cold, which is a good thing, since Donkey The Jacket might be out there waiting for us. And he’s not right in the head. “He” being Jamie Harris, better known round these parts as the unhinged frontman with virulent punk misfits The Cellar Family. Left alone, he’s no less unstable, intermittently shouting like a rabid street corner preacher haunted by the ghost of Buttole Surfers’ Gibby Haynes, while hitting his guitar with a tambourine, or doing that thing with his voice that makes him sound like a demented toddler

Demo of the Month wins a free half day at Silver Street Studios in Reading, courtesy of Trojan Horse Recordings. Visit www.trojanhorserecordings.co.uk

trapped in the body of a serial killer piglet. Give him an old end of the pier pipe organ and he sounds even more deranged, off-kilter psychedelic nursery rhymes lurching into tales of “filthy whores”. No, we think we’ll stay here for a while. Months even if that’s what it takes. Just until we’re sure he’s definitely gone. And for the slow of thinking of you out there in Readerland, this means we like this very much indeed, because there are too few nutters in music any more.

PIXEL FIX

A one-song demo here from Sam Jackson, aka Pixel Fix, further warming the cockles of our hearts with a chilled-out sliver of Ibiza-flavoured early morning beach bar shimmer. There are echoes of Chad Valley and Toro Y Moi, as well as the more spectral electro-pop of Glass Animals and Wild Swim about ‘Rosa’ as it fluffs about good-naturedly in a warm treacly lake of laidback vibes, before finally rousing itself for its final minute or so. Pleasant enough but as a stand-alone track it feels a bit too much like incidental music to a nature documentary. One involving dolphins and sea otters, most likely.

UNTIL THE BIRD

Don’t say we’re not a cosmopolitan bunch here on the Oxford music scene. Until The Bird here are a three piece whose members variously live in Oxford, London and Lithuania, which means they probably rehearse via Skype every Tuesday evening, and perhaps explains why the singer sounds like he belongs in a different band entirely. Musically there’s some great stuff on show here: inventive, playful carouselling strings, accordion, ukuleles and parping horns all play their parts in the busy arrangements, coming on like a folkier Penguin Café orchestra at their best, such as the complex ‘Ideas Of Eden’ and the spidery ‘Collateral’. Lyrically too there are some gems: “You smell of warm, and rare orchids and tropical storms,” laments the singer in the latter song, but the poetic effect is spoiled more than a little by his over-demonstrative, highly-strung delivery, which makes him sound more like a wannabe opera singer practising in the shower. A more ethereal female voice would fit this perfectly, but often it sounds like another one of those over-excitable strum’n’shouters who’s got lucky with a chamber orchestra. By final track ‘Taltiesin’, even the musicians seem to have sunk into a sullen drone, while the overwrought cries of “I was a fish in a stream until you caught me” stretch the nature metaphors too far and the whole thing ends up sounding like Stornoway’s distinctly less able kid brother.

PAUL EMERY

Sometimes even if the finished product isn’t quite what you might hope for, the thought that someone is striving for musical things beyond the mundane is enough to win our hearts. Like Paul here, whose four songs are basic, lo-fi and often slightly awkward, but suggest he’s stretching for depths of sorrow and loss that too many supposedly emotional singers can’t even imagine. Paul describes his music as “melancholic pop,” which is like saying 2012 was a bit damp. The poor guy’s wracked with misery by the sounds of it, simple distorted guitar drones and electronic crackles the only back up to his bordering-on-operatic proclamations of grief. Sometimes he reminds us of criminally-overlooked gloom-mongers Breathless, though he doesn’t possess Dominic Appleton’s effortless grace, while his best effort here, ‘Not Sleeping’ is a glitchy mudball of gutter blues that might be an attempt to marry Portishead with Tom Waits, or maybe transfer Depeche Mode into a Mississippi blues shack, and if it misses its targets, it’s appealingly disjointed and finds its own space in which to wallow. Hang on in there Paul, old chap – we’re off to buy another cask of Claret; we’ll be back to join you in a few minutes.

STUART NOAH

Nightshift likes to live life on the edge. Though by on the edge we mean on the edge of Oxford, in Kidlington. Stuart Noah would doubtless fail to sympathise. Describing himself as a “folk-punk-ish singer-songwriter,” his song ‘Lindsay Lohan’ isn’t, sadly, a vitriolic critique of vacuous celebrity culture or a declamation of driving a car while lashed to the gills. Instead it’s about playing life safe in your small-town comfort zone, avoiding even the slightest dangers, until the point he passes a mirror and realises he’s getting older and closer to death anyway, after which the song becomes a clarion call for all manner of irresponsible behaviour. So yeah, punk-ish, but not really wild enough to be punk. In fact it’s more jolly pub-rock, stomping and thumping in standard corner-of-the-Hog-and-Trough of a Sunday night. After which he’s having a cheery bash at middle class punks on ‘UMCP’, possibly a dig at old Etonian Frank Turner, before conjuring a love song of sorts in ‘Grace’, which seems to be about stalking a girl, then taking her home and keeping her prisoner after a hit and run accident, which certainly trumps ‘Love Will Tear Us Apart’ in the romance stakes. And it’s all simple, honest punk(ish) busker fun, but compared to the strange lunacy of Donkey The Jacket, way too safe, which when you consider the subject matter of that first song, is more than a little ironic.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email links to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, clearly marked Demos. IMPORTANT: no review without a contact address and phone number; no more than four tracks on a demo please. If you can’t handle criticism, please don’t send us your demo.

POST

According to their overly long, overly dry, personality-free biog, Post have “participated in numerous band competitions where they consistently finished in the top 3.” Imagine the crazy rollercoaster existence these guys enjoy, reader. The thrill and tension of all those band competitions, the near-triumph at not quite winning any of them. The eternal hope that next time, *next time*, that shiny trophy and two free days in the studio could really be theirs. Talking of studios, Post claim they went into the studio to find “that” sound they were looking for. Cor, “that” sound, eh? And did they find it? Oh yes, reader, they did. Under the mixing desk on a CD called ‘The Greatest 90 Indie Anthems Ever!’ Everything you could ever want from a great new band is here: a bit of Radiohead, a dash of Mansun; just a soupçon of Feeder. Maybe some more Radiohead, but not that weird electrony stuff they did later on, just the more rocky bits off ‘The Bends’. Give it a good shake, tip out the fun frothy stuff off the top and there you go – professional, proficient aural mulch, anonymous technical accomplishment flailing around in a soulless vacuum. Drink deep dear reader, you’re worth it.

THE DEMO DUMPER

ALEX CHALK

Monday 14th January. Officially the most depressing day of the year, though we’d posit that any day of the year where Julie Burchill, Richard Littlejohn or James Delingpole are allowed to infect the world with their opinions would provide stiff competition. Anyway, it’s snowing and raining and bloody cold, so a perfect setting to unwrap all the demos we saved til all the Christmas cheer had finally evaporated. And here we find Alex Chalk, who duly plunges us into a black void of emotional torment and restless ennui that is bleaker than the furrows of greying slush that line the road outside our window. Fresh from the dying-in-a-frozen-ditch school of strumming and moaning, the one song here, ‘Circles’, seems to be a story about some sad-eyed girl sitting under a white tree, but might as well be about a mad fried egg and some frightened cheese, since the self-defence part of our brains quickly shut off to spare us further pain, making the lyrics difficult to decipher. It’s probably meant to be romantic and poetic, but it makes us want to go and lie in front of skidding bin lorries if we’re honest.

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